

Louis “Bud” Kanyo

TE 959

Final Project: Language & Literacy Development

## **Background**

Project Title: Reading, Me, and We

Who: 88 students at Mid-Michigan Community College (MMCC)

When: Over the course of three weeks in the Winter 2011 term.

What: Were interviewed about their reading past, present, and future.

Where: In an anonymous online environment (Survey Monkey)

Why: To get a better understanding of how our community college students see themselves in terms of classroom-to-real world reading literacy.

---

## **Methods**

A series of interview questions were posted on the online learning management system of all the courses I am teaching in the Winter 2011 semester at MMCC and collected using the survey monkey internet service. Students were not required to take part in the project, but asked to volunteer.

---

## **Purpose**

MMCC services a traditionally marginalized demographic of students of returning to education after having entered the workforce or who have been unsuccessful in other educational institutions. That being said, the student body offers a grand opportunity to look at reading and reading literacy through the framework of the life-literate non-traditional student, who are often challenged by the literacy demands of the higher education classroom and consider possibilities to improve the preparation of students entering the K-12 system for the first time, as well as understand and reflect upon the positionality of those MMCC students who have not been traditionally successful in their academic endeavors.

---

## **Results**

### **Q1**

61.4% of students responded in some manner that they enjoyed reading, being read to, or looking through books before starting in the K-12 educational system.

“It allows people to become more educated even if they decide to go to college or even they do not finish high school.”

27.3% responded that they had a little interest in reading, being read to, or looking through books before starting in the K-12 educational system.

11.3% responded that they did not like reading, being read to, or looking through books before starting in the K-12 educational system.

## Q2

35.2% of students responded in some manner that they enjoyed reading in the classroom as they moved through the K-12 system. "I wish teachers would have taught me to read better. I loved reading books as a young child, but when I was forced to read in class is began to hate it."

38.6% of students responded in some manner that they enjoyed some of the reading in the classroom as they moved through the K-12 system, definitely not all of the reading.

"I do not read a lot and would like to read more but I do decide to read something, I believe titles that catch my opinion I enjoy reading more."

"I love to read you can have many adventures when you read a book. The only thing I would like to have done better is to be able to write my papers better on what I read. I have always struggled with English class but never had a problem reading anything."

26.2% responded that they did not like reading to any extent as they moved through the K-12 system.

"If it is not interesting enough, quite often focus is lost"

## Q3

78.4% of students responded that when faced with reading they didn't like, it was due to the topic not being of interest to them.

"I like to read books about subject I am interested in."

"I love to read, but during school I didn't like to because I was forced to read about things I didn't care about. If I was given an option of what books to read, then I probably would have been more interested."

"The biggest problem I have while reading is staying on the topic that i am reading. I tend to begin reading what I am assigned and I lose my focus and continue reading but end up stopping and having to read it over."

8.0% of students responded that when faced with reading they didn't like, it was due to there being too much reading to do.

13.6% of students responded that when faced with reading they didn't like, it was due to their not being able to understand the content of what they were asked to read.

"Pick better books that will interest the students [.]"

“Literacy is something that I have never really got into as a young child or a young adult. The reason I think is that I have always had a hard time understanding what I've read and or never finish a book. Well unless it was a children's book by Dr. Seuss. Reading is important and so is being aware of what you read.”

#### Q4

3.4% of students responded that outside of classroom and required readings they generally do not read in their daily life.

60.2% of students responded that outside of classroom and required readings they generally read only a very little bit in their daily life.

“I don't read many books, but I read newspapers and other informational articles all the time”

“It is very important for everyday life. We need to learn at a young age to be literate. It's an essential skill needed for a job, know how to do things, and understand written and spoken language.”

36.4% of students responded that outside of classroom and required readings they generally read quite a lot in their daily life.

#### Q5

1.1% of students don't see themselves using reading in their career or future.

35.2% of students see themselves reading required pieces for their job (email, memos, news, etc.) but nothing else in their future.

“I don't really have much to say about literacy. I have yet to find a book that has really caught my attention, therefore I don't like to read but know I will always have to.”

26.1% of students feel they will use reading to help develop themselves as a professional and person in their future.

“it is imperative that a person be literate in today's society[.]”

37.5% of students responded that they will read for a number of reasons, but most important for them will be reading for enjoyment once again.

#### Q6

28.4% of students most closely connect the word reading to the word *fun*.

“Reading opens the door for thought and imagination. It has always been easy and fun for me.”

“Love it!”

2.3% of students most closely connect the word reading to the word *hate*.

“It doesn't interest me as much now as it did 7 or 8 years ago. I used to love to read but now i hate it.”

“Give individuals the chance to be individuals in their reading. I hated the "required" reading. Let people chose their books as long as it falls within certain criteria. My son only likes to read non-fiction. His teachers have been good so far about letting him read those types of books for reading. I am worried about him next year as he enters high school and his required reading.”

14.8% of students most closely connect the word reading to the word *work*.

“I wish I had a desire to read for more than academic and occupational use. I see how much enjoyment some people get from it and envy them. The hardest part is finding something that interests me.”

3.4% of students most closely connect the word reading to the word *useless*.

51.1% of students most closely connect the word reading to the word *learning*.

“Literacy needs to be encouraged in schools more.”

“It's important to never stop learning. Reading is one of the ways that we can continue to learn.”

## Q7

64.8% of students believe college is easier for people who love to read and read well.

“even though i love to read my spelling and grammar is not as well as it should be.”

“Reading is the foundation to the house of life. If there is one thing I can pass on to my kids it would be my passion and knack for reading anything with words. Even the books I don't like teach me something or at least make me feel.”

18.2% of students do not believe college is easier for people who love to read and read well.

17.0% of students said they wish they were one of the people who love to read and read well.

“It saddens me to see our children pushed through the education system and the kids with learning disability are falling behind.”

## Q8

51.7% place themselves into the category of traditional college student (self-defined).

36. 8% place themselves into the category of non-traditional college student (self-defined).

11.5% place themselves into the category of a returning worker or retraining opportunity (self-defined).

#### Q9

75.0% of students shared that if they could start their educational journey over, they would push themselves harder to be a better reader.

"If you don't apply yourself to what you do then you are setting yourself up to fail."

"Reading well and reading comprehension are always positives, always. Being able to read well and understand what you read will serve you well your entire life."

"I love to read you can have many adventures when you read a book. The only thing I would like to have done better is to be able to write my papers better on what I read. I have always struggled with English class but never had a problem reading anything."

15.9% of students responded there wasn't a need to start over because reading isn't that big of a deal.

"Grammar shouldn't count. I'm not really sure; it's hard for some people who didn't have support growing as a child, so it becomes a little more challenging."

"Too much choice is given and not enough positive, constructive pressure."

9.1% of students still said they would avoid reading as much as possible.

#### Other Quotes by Students:

"Two things: 1) literacy is power (this is a given), and 2) certain institutions attempt to hinder students' develop of literacy. I attended a Catholic grade school. Around the 3rd or 4th grade, my teacher would not allow me to read a (less horror-driven) Stephen King novel for my book report. I was on my way toward becoming an advanced reader. Because the teacher automatically equated Stephen King with evil, she told me I had to stop reading it and choose another book. "The topic didn't interest me," and I feel this inevitably affected my literacy. The trade off, however, is that this Catholic school developed other literacies--primarily civic and critical literacy, which, in the long run, might have been more advantageous."

"The difference between reading in the classroom for an English class perse' and a Biology class is a huge difference! English books to me are more enjoyable than reading a "textbook" that is usually filled with extra jargon and long-winded ideas and opinions rather than facts. Those kinds of reading I don't prefer reading compared to English reading."

"When I was younger, I was very shy. I remember they made us read out-loud in front of the class. When it was my turn I was so struck with fear I stumbled over every word which made my fear even

worse. They put me into S.O.A.R.(a special reading class) It was a much smaller class room that consisted of only 4 other children. After the humiliation of being taken out of our "regular" class to attend a "special" class I was then placed with other children who really could not read. After a few weeks they determined I did not need to be in that class. Although, I could read just fine, it was my shyness that was the problem and they kept me in the class anyway. This made me hate reading and anything to do with it even more. I felt humiliated every day the small group of us had to leave the "regular" reading kids. This is where my hate of reading developed. As I got into high school I started to read a little more because I knew it would be beneficial to me in the long run. I just wish I would have taken more of an interest when I was younger. I think teachers of young children need to realize that school is a scary place for many shy young children. And reading out loud is a scary thing. They feel as though the entire room is judging every word and syllable that comes out of their mouth. I feel more on one attention in the reading aspect would have helped me a great deal. Forcing me to read in front of a class is what frightened me away from reading. It was my 4th grade teacher who finally helped me break the habit of being afraid to talk in front of people by giving me tips to calm myself."

"I believe it is very important to educational success."

"don't under estimate the importance of literacy!"

"I wish teachers would have taught me to read better. I loved reading books as a young child, but when I was forced to read in class is began to hate it."

"Reading in school was more of a punishment than anything, if there was a loud classroom we would have to read the textbook as punishment rather than attempt to learn as a classroom and at a young age I began to associate reading with punishment and why would I want to punish myself in my free time. If I had the opportunity I would ask that reading be brought in as a fun activity rather than a punishment."

"People don't read as often these days as they used to."

"I don't believe the importance of reading and comprehension is stressed enough in schools. Reading is important in developing communication skills, and there is so much that can be learned from the written words of others both past and present."

"I enjoy it, but the lack of good writers annoys me. I do enjoy a good book, but finding something that is not mediocre is near impossible, hence why I create my own stories and am a avid Role-player. \*cough\* Twilight \*cough\*"

"Literacy seems to have little value to younger generations. They don't care about reading or being able to read well."

"the books they make you read for school only interest a select few and not people who care about business, the books for English class only have people that you can relate to if you know anything about reading."

"I find myself able to read well without any problems."

"It's important to never stop learning. Reading is one of the ways that we can continue to learn."

"If what I'm reading makes sense and is interesting to me then I get into it. If neither of the above is true then it tends to bore me and I lose focus."

"I think that teachers should try to make reading more interesting or try to do activities with the reading so that the students will have more fun or interest in the reading subject."

"I had a reading disorder when I was younger, which made reading a lot harder as I moved into more advanced reading levels."

"Reading in the classroom was not enjoyable to me mostly due to the fact that if you were a more proficient you were punished if you read ahead. You were forced to lower your abilities."

"I am still learning, I will continue forever..."

"It is an extremely important part of our lives. As we grow older we must continue to be grow wiser and pass this on to generations to come....."

"I think that it needs to be encouraged at 'fun' at a younger age so more students will read for fun, while doing this, they will create better reading skills that will help tremendously in their future."

"being in a private school. Reading wasn't pushed to a great degree. i wish i had just the ambition to want it."

"It prevents what we know from being stagnated."

"to know something then to research in depth makes you more literate to the situation and for yourself. I love to have knowledge about as much as I can"

### **Future Research Needed**

In following this research, it may be helpful for more quantitative demographic data to be incorporated into the results for a more balance mixed methods feel and to also offer a more complete picture of how various indicants may or may not impact the reading literacy of students in traditionally marginalized community college settings.